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A new beginning

The first day of the first month

Gen. 8:6-17; 20-22; Ex.12:1-3; 40:1-11; 16-17

Some Bible passages I would like to read, starting with Genesis 8:6. It is about the story of Noah and the ark:

"So it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth. He also sent out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had abated from the face of the ground. But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth.

So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself. And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark. Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf was in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had abated from the earth. So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him anymore. And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry.

And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried. Then God spoke to Noah, saying, Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you: birds and cattle and every creeping thing that creeps on the

earth, so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth" (vv. 6-17).

Noah was thankful for his salvation, and so he "built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal, and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease. So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (vv. 20-22 – 9:1).

Then we turn to Exodus 12, where we read about the institution of the Passover in the first month of the year: "Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household" (vv. 1-3).

"Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it" (vv. 6-8).

And then we read another section from Exodus 40, where we find the dedication of the tabernacle on the first day of the first month: "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony, and partition off the ark with the veil. You shall bring in the table and arrange the things that are to be set in order on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and light its lamps. You shall also set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the Testimony, and put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. And you shall set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. You shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen at the court gate. And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it; and you shall hallow it and all its utensils, and it shall be holy. You shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering and all its utensils, and sanctify the altar. The altar shall be most holy. And you shall anoint the laver and its base, and sanctify it" (vv. 1-11).

"Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did. And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was raised up" (vv. 16-17).

After the flood

It is quite a lot of verses we've been reading together. But I don't know if you noticed, the connecting thought is actually this: the first day of the first month. It's not January 1 now, but it's still the first month. And it is also the first day of the week, when we gather together.

After the story of the flood, we find that Noah and his people were allowed to make a new beginning when the waters dried up from the earth. And in Genesis 8 we read, "And it was in the six hundredth year, in the first month, on the first day of that month, that the waters dried up from above the earth. Then Noah took away the hatch of the ark and looked out, and behold, the earth's surface had dried up" (v. 13).

It was a wholly new beginning after the great flood. The all-destroying flood had wiped out everything on the earth except those who were safe with Noah in the ark. And Noah let a dove out of the ark, which first returned with a fresh olive leaf in its beak as a sign of this new beginning. The cleansed earth dried up and began to sprout again. And Noah waited another seven days and he let the dove out, and it then did not return. So the dove must also have found a resting place on the new earth, where the water was disappearing. A place on the dry land, because the earth was drying up.

And then we read about the first day of the first month. In the six hundredth year, on the first of the first month, the waters had dried up from the earth. And this new beginning speaks typologically of the fact that for those who are in Christ, there is no more judgment. You can compare this section from Genesis 8 with Romans 8:1 and 2, where it says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death". The waters of judgment have dried up. In fact, those waters have come upon the Lord Jesus Himself, namely on the cross of Calvary. There He sank into God's flood of judgment in the three hours of darkness.

But for those who are now *in Christ Jesus*, there is no more condemnation. They are safe, just as Noah and his people were safe in the ark. So we may know that we are safe in our Lord and Savior forever. In Him we are sheltered, so that the waters

of divine judgment can harm us no more. The flood has passed. No more judgment threatens those who are in Jesus Christ. We stand on a completely new foundation, just as Noah and his people were allowed to enter a new earth and offer sacrifices to God.

This new foundation is the foundation of Christ's resurrection: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:2-4).

This is the new position of the Christian because of the offering of Christ for sin. It is a completely new beginning. We stand in Christ on this new foundation, the basis of the resurrection. And that is the same foundation of grace, about which we speak. And we can read of it in Romans 5, that we are justified by faith and have obtained peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace or favor in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. That typifies the same new position, on which we can stand by grace. So we stand in this position where we enjoy the favor and grace of God, just as Noah and his own were God's favored ones.

God blessed Noah and his people. They were allowed to bear fruit; there was a new beginning. The old had passed away; everything had become new. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17). And all this by virtue of His finished work, by His sufferings and death, because He suffered and bore our judgment. That gigantic flood of the wrath of God has come upon Him, and it passed over Him. We are safe in Him. We can find ourselves now, as it were, on a new, cleansed earth and live in God's presence.

The celebration of the Passover

In Exodus 12 we also find a new beginning: "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you" (v. 2). And that was the month of Abib, the month of green ears, in which the Passover was to be celebrated, followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. By the way, on the first day of the month there was also the later instituted feast of the new-moon (Num. 28:11-15; Ps. 81:4). But with the Passover, the tenth and fourteenth days of the month are in the foreground.

So this new beginning was made possible for Israel by virtue of the Paschal Lamb. By virtue of the sacrifice that they brought, and the blood of which was put on both doorposts and the lintel of the houses, while in those houses they ate the Paschal Lamb. It all speaks of the new beginning, now made possible by the finished work of our Savior. Just as Noah and his people were, so to speak, transferred in the ark to a new, cleansed earth, so there was a wholly new beginning here for the people of Israel as a nation, through the celebration of the Passover and the exodus from Egypt.

They were delivered from the land of slavery, the land of Egypt, by virtue of the blood of the Paschal Lamb. This is how they were led out. Their year began, so to speak, with this great event of salvation: the exodus from Egypt. It was a new beginning by virtue of the death of the Lamb. And so it is with us. We have been redeemed from the present evil world (Gal. 1:4). And we are traveling to the heavenly Canaan, to the land of promise. We are on our way there, the land of blessing.

The tabernacle erected

Also in Exodus 40, we find a new beginning. The first day of the first month, that would be now the first day of the first month in the *second* year after the exodus from Egypt. And on that New Year's Day, the tabernacle was erected, the house of God; and this actually points to Pentecost; because that is also a new beginning. We do not only live after the time of Easter, but also after the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descended to the earth at Pentecost. He was sent by the exalted Christ. And the church was formed as the Holy Spirit took up His residence in the church. This started from the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

In Exodus 40:2 we read, "On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting". The spiritual house of God was founded by the coming and dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church here on earth. And the Holy Spirit is still continuing to build this house of God, the temple of the living God. And everything happens according to the plans of God. We didn't read all that, we see in verse 16: "Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did". But if you read on through the chapter, this is repeated very often: As the LORD had commanded Moses.

Everything was done according to the will of God, including the ordination of the priests, who were to perform the work in the tabernacle. That too was done in accordance with the commandments of God, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

And then in verse 33 we read: So Moses completed the work. This is also a wonderful expression. We are living in the day of grace, the time when we can look back on the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. But the building of the church itself is also in fact a completed reality. But it still continues in practice, and when the last believer is added to this spiritual house, then it is truly complete. And Christ will realize all this. He is the Builder, for "on this rock I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18).

Christ is doing this and He will also complete it. Everything happens in accordance with the thoughts of God. And that is the work that the Holy Spirit did at Pentecost and is still continuing, until the spiritual house is entirely complete. And all those parts of that house, all that is needed for worship, for sacrificial service, all is done in accordance with the thoughts of God.

But, of course, we may ask ourselves: How is it with us? Do we assume that everything with us naturally responds to the thoughts of God? Is it as the LORD had commanded Moses? As the Lord Jesus wills it? As the Holy Spirit wills it? Is whatever we do and whatever we experience really in accordance with His thoughts? Then we realize, we see this in the example of the people of Israel, that there was also much failure among the people of God. We see this in the New Testament as well.

There came a time in Israel when the temple, the successor to the tabernacle, was completely closed. The house of God was closed and it was no longer used due to human failure. Fortunately, God gave revivals so that His people restored the house of God and reintroduced its worship. Think of the time of restoration, and revival, in the days of King Hezekiah and King Josiah. Then, so to speak, a new beginning was made again. In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, such a new beginning also started in the history of the people of God (Ezra 6:16 – 7:10). These are recommendable examples that Scripture gives us.
